

Performance Pay for Teachers

PA 1029 of 2007 (sponsor: Rep. Mike Kenney, R-Siloam Springs) establishes a pilot performance pay program for teachers in up to 12 public school districts or charter schools.

The measure includes a statement of legislative intent to provide "incentives that will encourage teachers to improve their knowledge and instructional skills in order to improve student learning (pages 1 & 2)."

The act is a dramatic step forward for advocates of Arkansas education reform.

The measure specifies that "performance goals and benchmarks for improvement" will be among determining factors (page 4). Student test scores will also be used in teacher performance pay evaluations (page 6).

The act also establishes thresholds for participation in the program:

"As part of the application process, participant schools shall conduct a vote of the teachers, with the threshold for acceptance being 70 percent or another percent established by a majority vote of the teachers and approved by the local board."

If 51 percent of teachers in a district or charter elect not to participate in the program it shall not be implemented (page 4).

The measure, like the charter expansion, is likely to play a role in the delivery of educational services in the Delta region. A 2006 Policy Foundation study relied on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to assign a letter grade to each Arkansas K-12 district. Eight of the nine districts receiving 'F' grades are located in eastern Arkansas.

The study, and other Policy Foundation education recommendations, are available online at:

www.reformarkansas.org